MARVEL

1

MICHELINIE
FIORELLI
VALENZA

BRAINS ARE BACK ON THE MENU!

VENOM

LETHAL PROTECTOR

NEW YORK CITY. SOME YEARS AGO.

WE SAID...

PHHHHT

...LEAVE...

KTANG

...US...

THWIPT

...ALONE!

DEMONS OCCULTATUM

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BRYAN VALENZA COLORIST VC'S TRAVIS LANHAM LETTERER
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THERE, THAT'S BETTER!

IT'S WHAT YOU GET FOR CARELESS *STALKING*, FOR ALLOWING YOUR SHADOWS TO *PRECEDE* YOU.

THAT'S WHY WE LED YOU *HERE*, WHERE WE WOULDN'T BE BOTHERED BY BUTTINSKIES WITH BADGES!

BUT EVEN *OUR* PATIENCE HAS LIMITS. EXPLAIN YOURSELVES--

--WHILE YOU STILL HAVE A *TONGUE!*

EH--?

THUWWIT

SKRRUNCH

HOLY COW, LARRY! TH-THAT COULDA BEEN *US!*

NOT IF WE AIN'T HERE!

RUN!

FEH. AMATEURS! LET THEM GO.

BESIDES, SENSELESS VIOLENCE HAS ALWAYS DONE WONDERS FOR OUR *APPETITE...!*

WHAT? OH. YES, OF COURSE. DINING ON CARRION *WOULD BE* UNDIGNIFIED.

AFTER ALL, WE ARE NOT AN ANIMAL.

VENOM DOESN'T EAT ***SCRAPS!***

OH MAN, THIS IS GREAT!

NOT MANY PERKS BEIN' A GARAGE ATTENDANT, BUT CHANNEL NINE WILL PAY *BIG* TO GET THIS ON--

Channel 9

NEWS AT NOON NEWSBREAK! THIS JUST IN!

CHANNEL NINE HAS OBTAINED EXCLUSIVE FOOTAGE OF THE DERANGED FELON CALLED VENOM BATTLING A LITTLE-KNOWN TRIO OF COSTUMED VILLAINS!

GOING BY THE UNLIKELY NAMES OF *JAGGED BOW, DEATH-SHIELD* AND, *UM, BLOOD SPIDER...?*

AHEM THE HAPLESS TEAM WAS NO MATCH FOR--

TEAM? SAY, *THERE'S* AN IDEA!

ONE, MY LITTLE FRIENDS, THAT MIGHT SOLVE ALL OF OUR PROBLEMS!

EVER SINCE EMPIRE SATE UNIVERSITY RESCINDED MY GRANT, I'VE HAD TO SCRAPE FOR EVERY DIME TO CONTINUE MY RESEARCH.

TO CONVINCE THE WORLD--

--THAT *INSECTS* ARE THE KEYS TO THE FUTURE!

MY THEORIES COULD PROVIDE SO MANY ADVANCES: MEDICINE, AGRICULTURE, EVEN...DARE I SAY... COMPANIONSHIP.

TAP TAP

AND WITH MY NEWLY PERFECTED CREATION, THE *TRANS-SPECIES LINGUITRON*, WE'LL EVEN BE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE!

BUT FIRST: MONEY!

MY EFFORTS TO OBTAIN FUNDING HAVE FAILED, LEFT ME ON PAROLE IN THIS PITIFUL HOVEL.

BUT IF I SEE MY NOBLE QUEST AS A *JOB...?* I MEAN, MEMBERS OF TEAMS GET PAID, DON'T THEY? FOOTBALL, BASEBALL?

I DON'T KNOW WHY I NEVER THOUGHT OF THIS BEFORE!

PERHAPS IT'S TIME FOR *PROFESSOR BUCK MITTY* TO SWALLOW HIS PRIDE AND SEEK GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT.

TIME FOR--

--HUMBUG TO SOAR AGAIN!

AND AS AFTERNOON LENGTHENS THE SHADOWS IN CENTRAL PARK...

NO, NO, I'M FINE.

ER, THAT IS, *WE'RE* FINE. AREN'T WE...?

IT'S JUST... THOSE THREE MISCREANTS ATTACKING US--WHY?

WE NEVER ASKED TO BE WHAT WE ARE!

"NO ONE QUESTIONED RIPPING YOU FROM YOUR HOME PLANET AND BRINGING YOU TO EARTH, DID THEY?

"NO ONE ASKED HOW YOU SUFFERED WHEN THE HOST YOU CHOSE, ***PETER PARKER***, REJECTED AND ABANDONED YOU.

"NO ONE ASKED *ME* HOW IT FELT WHEN THAT SAME PARKER EXPOSED MY HEADLINE STORY IN THE *DAILY GLOBE* TO BE BASED ON A CHARLATAN'S LIES, DESTROYING MY CAREER.

DAILY BUGLE

AKER FIRED

Eddie Brock

"THOUGH IN RETROSPECT, ***NEITHER*** OF US THOUGHT TO QUESTION OUR DECISION TO SEEK COMFORT IN OUR SHARED ANGER, TO BECOME... WHAT WE ARE."

EVEN NOW, WE FACE FOES BOTH GOOD AND EVIL, SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY REFUSE TO UNDERSTAND THAT ALL WE WANT TO DO IS *PROTECT THE INNOCENT.*

WELL, THAT...AND *KILL SPIDER-MAN,* OF COURSE!

JUST LOOK AT THEM: HAPPY. SAFE. LIKE OVERGROWN CHERUBS, TROUBLED ONLY BY THEIR PETTY DECISIONS OF WHO TO MATE WITH AND WHAT TO WATCH ON TV.

SOMETIMES, I ENVY THEM.

SOMETIMES, I...I ALMOST WISH...

HELP! POLICE! S-S-SAVE ME!

C'MON, LADY, THE PURSE--!

BUT MY RENT MONEY IS IN THERE! I'LL BE EVICTED--!

SO GET CREATIVE! I SAW A NICE REFRIGERATOR CRATE DOWN ON THIRD STREET--!

YOUNG MAN, YOUR FASHION SENSE IS SIMPLY *APPALLING!*

THAT PURSE DOESN'T GO WITH YOUR OUTFIT AT ALL!

PLIP

PLLATCH

YOUR PROPERTY, MADAM. AND WE HOPE THIS UNFORTUNATE INCIDENT HASN'T UPSET YOU TOO--

HELP! POLICE! S-S-SAVE ME!

YES. A "THANK YOU" WOULD BE NICE.

JUST ONCE...!

AFTERNOON SLIPS INTO TWILIGHT, BRINGING A LIGHT AUTUMN RAIN TO THE HUDSON RIVER DOCKS...

HOW'S THIS, MICHAEL: "HELP WANTED, PIZZA DELIVERY. MUST HAVE OWN BICYCLE. MINIMUM WAGE."

WELL, PAL, AT THIS POINT, I GUESS IT WOULD BE A STEP UP...!

GOOD EVENING, GENTLEMEN.

DAILY BUGLE

FAKER FIRED

Eddie Brock

YOU *ARE* THE TWO SURVIVORS OF THIS MORNING'S UNFORTUNATE DEBACLE WITH VENOM, AREN'T YOU?

WHA--? H-HOW'D YOU FIND US?

QUITE EASILY. MY LITTLE FRIENDS ARE EVERYWHERE. AND THANKS TO MY TRANS-SPECIES LINGUITRON, THEY TELL ME EVERY*THING*.

JUST ONE OF THE ENVIABLE ADVANTAGES OF BEING--

--HUMBUG!

AND I THOUGHT THE NAMES TASKMASTER GAVE *US* WERE LAME!

I ALSO WIELD THE UNPARALLELED POWER OF *AMPLIFIED INSECT SOUNDS.*

THE PIERCING SHRIEK OF THE *IMBRICATED SNOUT BEETLE,* THE UNSTOPPABLE ROAR OF THE *SHORT-NOSED CATTLE LOUSE AND* SO MANY OTHERS!

AND LUCKILY FOR YOU, I'VE DECIDED TO JOIN YOUR LITTLE BAND.

I TRUST YOUR MEDICAL PLAN INCLUDES DENTAL?

BWAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!

WAAAHOHOHO!

KEEHEEHEE!

HMPH.

BEAT IT, CREEP! AND TAKE YER PET COCK-A-ROACHES WITH YA!

THE WORLD HAS NOT HEARD THE *LAST* OF...WELL... ME!

THUS DOES EVENING DEEPEN INTO NIGHT. RAIN TURNS TO DRIZZLE...

...AS ON LIBERTY ISLAND, TROUBLED THOUGHTS TURN TO THE PAST.

BEAUTIFUL, ISN'T IT?

PEOPLE GIVE NEW YORK A BAD RAP, BUT EVERYONE STILL WANTS TO LIVE HERE.

USED TO BE MY TURF, Y'KNOW. MY TURF, MY PEOPLE.

HAD A GOOD JOB, FRIENDS, THE RESPECT OF MY PEERS.

HAD A WIFE TOO. EVEN A DOG.

SO WHAT DO I HAVE NOW? LOSERS ATTACKING ME FOR NO REASON? LIVING IN SUBWAY TUNNELS AND BUILDINGS SCHEDULED FOR DEMOLITION?

PLUS, THE OPEN WOUND OF KNOWING THAT WEB-SLINGING BETRAYER IS FREE TO ENJOY ALL THE THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN TAKEN FROM ME?!

NO COMMENTS? NO ADVICE? WHAT'S THE MATTER--CAT GOT YOUR TONGUE?

I SHUDDER TO THINK WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO *THAT* CAT!

OH, I GET IT. JEALOUS BECAUSE I'M SAYING "ME" INSTEAD OF "WE."

IS IT MY FAULT THAT I HAD ANOTHER LIFE BEFORE US THAT I SOMETIMES CAN'T HELP... REMEMBERING?

SO WHY DON'T *YOU* TRY IT? TELL ME ABOUT YOUR HOMEWORLD. WHAT DID YOU DO FOR FUN? DID YOU HAVE A GIRLFRIEND?

BOYFRIEND?

PARAKEET...?

HAVE IT YOUR WAY, THEN. AS FOR ME, I NEED SOMEONE ELSE TO TALK TO.

CAN'T GO AROUND TALKING TO MYSELF, CAN I?

NO? KEEPING IT ALL TO YOURSELF?

OKAY.

THAT WOULD BE *CRAZY!*

PLLIP

HEY! WH-WHAT WAS THAT?!

JUST AN UPDRAFT, EARL. DON'T BE SUCH A WUSS!

AND SOON, AT A WELL-KEPT TOWNHOUSE NEAR NEW YORK'S GRAMERCY PARK...

SUNSHINE ON MY SHOULDER MAKES ME HAP--

HEY, BABE.

+GASP+ EDDIE?!

H-HOW DID YOU--?

YOU ALWAYS WERE TOO TRUSTING, ANNIE. HOW MANY TIMES DID I TELL YOU TO LOCK THE DOORS?

B-BUT THE POLICE--! YOU SHOULDN'T BE HERE!

NO, THIS IS EXACTLY WHERE I *SHOULD* BE.

IF I HADN'T GONE OFF THE DEEP END, MADE YOUR LIFE AS MISERABLE AS MY OWN...

WE HAD SOME GOOD TIMES, ANNIE, DIDN'T WE? REMEMBER?

YEAH, EDDIE, SOME OF THE BEST.

AND I MISS THEM TOO.

BUT YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND: WE CAN'T GO BACK. THINGS HAVE CHANGED. *YOU'VE* CHANGED!

AND I...I'M--

YO, ANNE! CAB'S HERE! YOU READY?

J-JUST ABOUT, ALLEN! I'LL BE RIGHT DOWN!

EDDIE...?

C'MON, HON, METER'S RUNNING!

I EVEN GRABBED AN UMBRELLA SO YOU WON'T GET THAT MILLION-DOLLAR HAIRDO WET!

THAT'S SWEET, ALLEN. YOU WIN THE GOLD FOR THOUGHTFULNESS.

OF COURSE.

ISN'T THAT WHAT A FIANCÉ IS FOR?

FEE...

...AHN...

...SAAAY?!

WE'LL DEVOUR HIS BRAIN! WE'LL SUCK HIS MARROW! WE'LL PLUCK HIS EYES FOR GARNISH AND SAVOR THEM WITH A NICE CHIANTI! WE--

NO. WE WON'T.

BECAUSE THAT...

...WOULD HURT...

...HER.

MORNING RETURNS, BRINGING WITH IT A RAIN-WASHED SPARKLE TO THE LONG ISLAND COMPLEX OF KELNER SCIENTIFIC INNOVATIONS...

THAT'S RIGHT, MR. DRAKE--

--PROGRESS HAS PROCEEDED BEYOND OUR MOST CONSERVATIVE PROJECTIONS!

THE TECHNICAL STAFF HAS COMPLETED THE REFINING MECHANISM--

--AND MY METAGENIC FORMULA IS UNDERGOING FINAL ANIMAL TESTS AS WE SPEAK.

JUST MAKE SURE YOU DON'T PROCEED TOO QUICKLY, DR. HARWOOD. SHOULD YOU FAIL, THE LIFE FOUNDATION WOULD BE MOST DISPLEASED.

AND OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS IS ALWAYS LOOKING FOR NEW "VOLUNTEERS"--

--FOR ITS HUMAN TESTING DIVISION!

Y-YES, SIR!

I-I MEAN, NO, SIR! I MEAN--

÷GULP÷

MANHATTAN.

FOUR HUNDRED FORTY-THREE...

BATTERY PARK.

...FOUR HUNDRED FORTY-FOUR...

BELOW.

...FOUR HUNDRED... FOR...TY...

KRRRAK

...FIVE!

NO GOOD. WORKING OUT USED TO CALM US, EASE OUR STRESS. NOW... NOT SO MUCH.

OH? YOU HAVE A SUGGESTION?

FIND SPIDER-MAN AND REND HIM LIMB FROM LIMB?

BRILLIANT! THE PERFECT SOOTHING BALM!

MAYBE WE CAN EVEN GO FOR ICE CREAM AFTER!

AND SO, A SHORT WALK NORTH...

CHINATOWN IS AS GOOD A PLACE TO START AS ANY.

THOUGH IT DOES SEEM UNUSUALLY CROWDED TODAY.

SHOP

WHA--?

SPARE CHANGE, MISTER? I AIN'T EATEN IN TWO DAYS.

THAT'S *YOUR* PROBLEM.

WE HAVE MORE *IMPORTANT* TASKS TO--

+SIGH+ YES, YOU'RE RIGHT. THAT WAS UNCALLED-FOR.

THE OLD MAN IS PROBABLY JUST A VICTIM OF GOVERNMENT MEDDLING OR CORPORATE CHICANERY--AS INNOCENT AS YOU OR ME.

KRA-KEESH

REEE REEE REEE

WE WERE RUDE. WE APOLOGIZE.

HERE--

--BUY YOURSELF A SANDWICH.

I AGREE. NO MATTER HOW GREAT OUR ANGER, HOW DEEP OUR DISAPPOINTMENT, IT ALWAYS LIGHTENS THE HEART--

SHOP

--TO DO SOMETHING GOOD FOR THE LESS FORTUNATE.

B-B-B-BUT--!

I RAN DOWN A LOT OF LEADS AROUND HERE WHEN I WAS A REPORTER. THIS ALLEY SHOULD TAKE US STRAIGHT TO THE MAIN--

WHOA.

HAVE TO ADMIT, WHEN NEW YORK CELEBRATES, THEY DO IT *RIGHT!* DRAGONS, GHOSTS, EVEN YAOJING. BUT...

WHAT'S *THAT* GUY MADE UP TO BE? DOESN'T LOOK LIKE HE'S CELEBRATING.

ALMOST LOOKS AS THOUGH HE'S ABOUT TO--

--ATTACK?!

SHHRRIZZ

YOU'RE FAST! NOT MANY COULD EVADE THE SHATTERING CRY OF THE *COWPEA WEEVIL!*

JUST ONE OF THE MANY WEAPONS WIELDED BY *HUMBUG!*

OH, PLEASE, NOT *ANOTHER* ONE!

WHAT DO YOU LOSERS DO, SHARE NOTES?

HOW'D YOU EVEN FIND US?

MY LITTLE *PARTNERS* ARE EVERYWHERE. NOTHING CAN HIDE FROM THEM-- OR ME!

"PARTNERS"? COCKROACHES TALK TO YOU?

THAT'S WEIRD. BUT...

...TASTY!

CRUNCH

ULULULULU

NOOOOOOO!

SYMBIOTE... TREMBLING? LOSING CONTROL--!

LIKE TRYING TO WALK ON ICE...AFTER A PITCHER OF MARGARITAS!

NOW PERHAPS YOU'LL SHOW MORE RESPECT FOR THE DISORIENTING GROWL OF THE *WHEAT STEM SAWFLY!*

WHAT I'LL SHOW--

--IS HOW TO WEB UP A THIRD-RATE B MOVIE REJECT!

PLLIP

P-PLIP

NOT IF THE SEETHING ROAR OF THE *BLOODSUCKING CONENOSE* HAS ANYTHING TO SAY ABOUT IT!

TTSSSSSSSSS

TSSSS

WEB-LAUNCHERS-- DISSOLVING?

SOUND!

FIRE AND SOUND ARE THE ONLY THINGS THAT HURT US!

AND THE VARIED SOUNDS HUMBUG GENERATES MUST BE CAUSING UNPREDICTABLE REACTIONS!

BUT EDDIE BROCK STILL HAS A BRAIN--AND THE BODY OF AN OLYMPIAN!

AND THOSE ARE ALL WE NEED--

--TO SQUASH AN ANNOYING LITTLE *BUG* LIKE--

SHZZAZZAZZAK!

WHOMP

MY OTHER! LIMP...COLD... C-CAN'T HEAR IT...CAN'T *FEEL* IT.

IT'S...

...GONE?

NUTS! SHOULD'VE FIGURED THE BOYS IN BLUE WOULD SHOW UP BY NOW!

NO MATTER.

WEE-OOO-WEE-OOO

I'VE MADE MY POINT. THE MIGHTY VENOM HAS EVEN RUN AWAY!

THOUGH COME TO THINK OF IT, THAT'S NOT A BAD IDEA!

HARD TO GRASP, TO ACCEPT. AFTER SO LONG AS "US," I'M NOT SURE...HOW TO FEEL.

LAST TIME I WAS ALONE, YOU GAVE ME PURPOSE, FOCUS, LITERALLY A REASON TO LIVE.

WITH YOU, I HAD PASSION TO REPAY THOSE WHO PREY ON THE INNOCENT, AS WE OURSELVES WERE ONCE INNOCENT.

NOW, WITHOUT YOU, I HAVE NOTHING.

NOW, WITHOUT YOU...

...I AM NOTHING.

IN CHINATOWN, THE NOISE OF CELEBRATION SLOWLY RETURNS, A SHARP CONTRAST TO THE SILENCE IN EDDIE BROCK'S SOUL.

WHILE ON THE NEARBY RIVER DOCKS...

HEY, MICHAEL, CHECK THIS OUT!

THAT GOOFBALL WITH THE ROACH FETISH IS LEGIT! HE ACTUALLY TOOK DOWN *VENOM!*

YOU'RE KIDDIN'!

DAILY BUGLE

VENOM FALLS LITERALLY!

MAYBE WE COULD USE HIM AFTER ALL. I MEAN, WE WERE GONNA SPLIT THE TAKE THREE WAYS ANYWAY.

YEAH, THAT'S TRUE. BUT A *HALF* EACH IS STILL BETTER THAN A *THIRD.*

GUESS IT ALL DEPENDS...

DIAMANT HOMME

...ON *HOW* WE USE 'IM!

WHILE ON LONG ISLAND, AT KELNER SCIENTIFIC INNOVATIONS...

...OTHER WOULD-BE *USERS* CONSPIRE.

THAT'S RIGHT, MR. DRAKE-- THE FINISHED FORMULA MEETS PARAMETERS IN EVERY TEST!

FINE, DR. HARWOOD. BUT WE MUST BE CERTAIN. AFTER ALL, THERE'S NO WAY TO PRETEST THE FORMULA ON ITS ACTUAL TARGET.

THAT'S TRUE, SIR, BUT I HAVE EVERY CONFIDENCE THAT THE FINAL PHASE WILL BE SUCCESSFUL.

I'D BET MY LIFE ON IT!

YOU ALREADY *HAVE*, DOCTOR.

UH, D-DON'T WORRY, SIR. YOU HAVE MY PERSONAL ASSURANCE THAT WITHIN 48 HOURS--

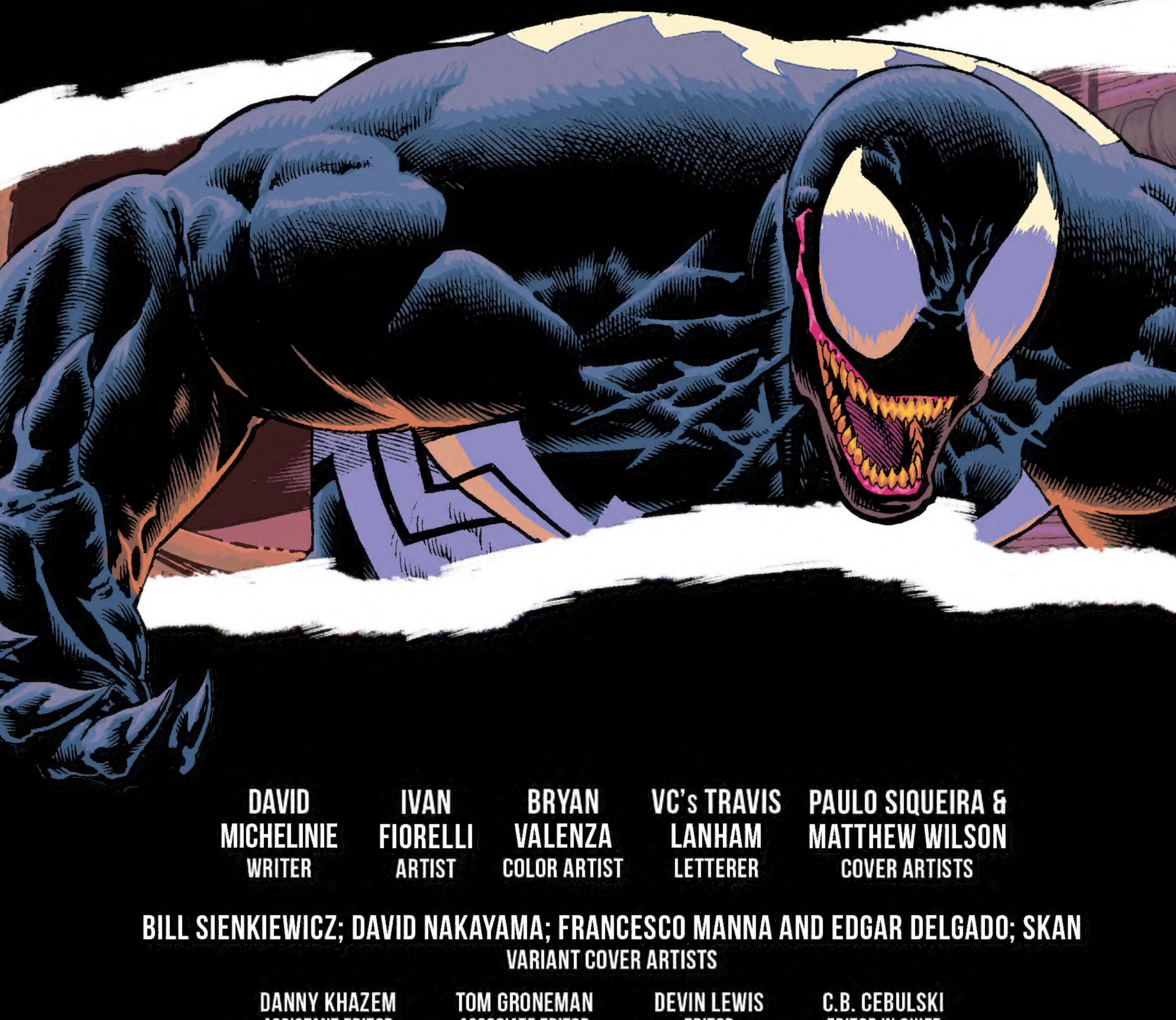
--VENOM WILL BE YOURS TO *COMMAND!*

TO BE CONTINUED!

EDDIE BROCK WAS ONCE A RESPECTED JOURNALIST. BUT HIS CAREER WAS DESTROYED WHEN ONE OF HIS SOURCES WAS EXPOSED AS A FRAUD BY SPIDER-MAN. DISGRACED, BROCK WENT TO HIS NEIGHBORHOOD CHURCH TO ASK FORGIVENESS BEFORE TAKING HIS OWN LIFE, UNAWARE THAT AN EXTRATERRESTRIAL PARASITE WAS IN THE PARISH'S BELL TOWER. SPURNED AND LEFT FOR DEAD BY THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN, THE CREATURE CHOSE BROCK AS ITS HOST. IN THE PROCESS, IT IMBUED HIM WITH ALL OF SPIDER-MAN'S ABILITIES AND MORE: POWERS OF ADHESION, ORGANIC WEB-SHOOTERS ON THE BACK OF EACH HAND AND PREHENSILE TENDRILS WOVEN FROM THE CREATURE'S OWN BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL. ON A TWISTED CRUSADE AND OBSESSED WITH JUSTICE, THEY ARE:

VENOM

LETHAL PROTECTOR



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Eddie's Clubhouse

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HELLO, VENOMANIACS! And welcome to VENOM: LETHAL PROTECTOR! This is a book that is very near and dear to my heart, as I'm sure it will one day be to yours!

The first VENOM: LETHAL PROTECTOR was the character's first self-titled comic book series, and it is one of my favorite comics EVER! Written by David Michelinie and with art by Mark Bagley and Ron Lim, LETHAL was the culmination of everything Venom had been to that point: intense, over the top and scary! It's a Marvel classic, and if you haven't read it already, what are you WAITING FOR?! Go get it right now, and treat yourself to a FORMATIVE and terrific VENOM story!

That's part of what makes this new volume of LETHAL PROTECTOR particularly exciting--it gives us the special opportunity to revisit the earliest days of the character's history. And who better to spin that yarn than Venom co-creator David Michelinie?! Longtime Venom fans will recognize David's name instantly, as he and illustrator Todd McFarlane and their incredibly talented collaborators were responsible for breathing life into Spider-Man's spurned alien costume and bonding it to Eddie Brock. The rest, as they say, is history.

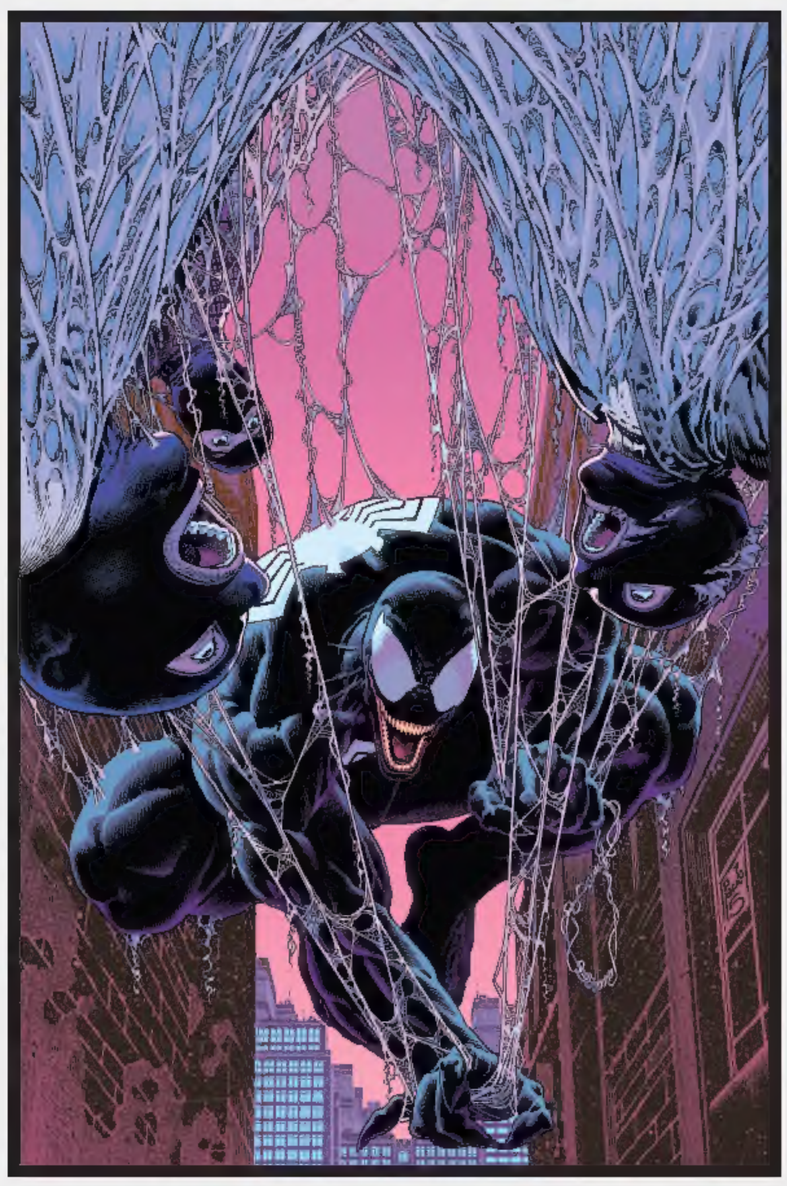
But David's killer scripts are only half of this story! I couldn't possibly draft up a letter column introducing you readers out there in Mighty Marveldom to this book without mentioning illustrator Ivan Fiorelli. Ivan is a tremendous talent, and this series marks his debut in the symbiotic corner of the Marvel Universe. I'm sure you readers will agree with me when I say that I hope he sticks around for YEARS to come! This series is one of the leanest and meanest VENOM books in a while, and JUST WAIT until you see what surprises David and Ivan have up their sleeves.

Color artist Bryan Valenza and letterer extraordinaire Travis Lanham round out this murderers' row of comic creators, and without them, this book wouldn't be half as gorgeous as it is! Bryan's one of the best colorists in the biz and has such a talent for breathing life into Ivan's black-and-white pages. He's the sort of colorist who makes the Marvel Universe feel like a real place you could step into, if you were to just throw yourself at a comic book hard enough...

But maybe don't do that for this series--after all, Venom is one of the most dangerous and lethal characters in the Marvel U., and you wouldn't even want to THINK about getting on his bad side. So watch your back, and tell your comic shop to add the next issue to your pull list!

Until then--STAY SHARP!
Devin
2.16.22

NEXT:



ZONE